

Minutes of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Best Practices in Municipal Decision Making
June 26, 2008.

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM by Jim Palermo in the old Council on Aging space in Memorial Hall. The meeting was taped by NCTV for future broadcast.

Present: Committee members Jim Palermo, Wendy Foxmyn, David Narkewicz, Michael Bardsley and Bob Reckman. Two members of the public were present: Bonnie Rose and Susan Enz.

The minutes of our meeting of June 4 were approved.

The committee agreed that our next meeting would be on July 2 in the Board Room at the DPW at 6 PM.

There was some discussion of the process for evaluating the results of the public forum in May. Jim confirmed the committee's general support for their direction. The Committee agreed to the concept of grouping into a few major categories the comments, suggestions and concerns expressed by the public during the public forum, or through other means. More extensive discussion of this matter will be deferred until our next meeting when Alex and Lisa will be present to discuss their thoughts and make recommendations.

There was general support for the idea of having a future public event about some past process/decision, such as the Meadows Land Use Plan. The Committee agreed to invite participants in prior decision-making processes to meet with the Committee in order to share their experiences relative to the issues under each category. Yet to be decided is the format of such meeting(s), which will be a topic of discussion at the Committee's next meeting. Bob volunteered his willingness to bring the key players in the Meadows Land Use Plan together some time in the future in a public event.

Jim clarified that our formal discovery period would end late in September (although discovery cannot help but be on going) and that we would have our recommendations to the Council by Dec. 4, 2008. This means getting the information to Lyn about a week before Dec. 4. There was also discussion of how we can better let the public know our plans.

Michael reported that 3 people had complained to him that the BPW had made a decision last night about annual permit fee increases without adequate public notice.

Wendy reported recent criticism of decisions made on Hospital Hill about Kohlmorgen's relocation there. There was a lively discussion about how best to communicate with the broad public. She said that she is continuing to attend public meetings and evaluate them. Wendy thought that we should get better coverage from the local papers and suggest concrete steps towards that end. She encouraged us all to do our homework and move ahead together.

Wendy, Michael and Bob described the group that has invited the Notre Dame team to come to Northampton in the fall. They all believe that this may be a fine example of best practices. Bob read the invitation letter to the BPC.

The meeting adjourned at 7:12 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Reckman